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Article published Nov 5, 2007

Wear reflective gear at night

Standard time's early dusk hurts drivers' vision

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For The Salinas Californian

If you drive, you know how often you have almost hit someone because you could not see them in the dark.

With daylight savings time ending, night falls earlier, and as a result motorists, pedestrians and bicyclists need to take care.

More than 60 percent of pedestrian injuries and deaths and nearly one-third of fatal bicycle crashes occur in low light or the dark.

Wearing light or white clothes is not enough. Drivers first see pedestrians wearing blue at 55 feet, wearing red at 80 feet, wearing yellow at 129 feet, and wearing white at 180 feet.

But it takes 260 feet for a vehicle going 60 mph to stop.

Materials make difference

Reflective materials, which help make people visible in the dark, can make a life-saving difference. According to the Federal Highway Administration,

"A person dressed in black, wearing a thumb-sized reflector, is detected at longer distances than a person dressed completely in white."

Reflectors are the only proven method of making pedestrians and cyclists visible - as much as 500 feet away from a car's headlights - so drivers can slow down or stop in time.

Pedestrians and cyclists wearing reflective materials are less likely to be struck. Parents should select shoes, jackets, and backpacks that have reflective areas on them for their children and themselves. Wearing these items does not take any extra thought or effort.

In addition, other reflective items, such as arm or leg bands, gloves, vests and caps are available.

For those without reflective clothing, special tapes and Velcro reflective characters and designs can easily be purchased and attached to clothing.

Lights work, too

Light sources, including light sticks, strobes and other flashing lights, are also available and can be clipped to clothing or held. Many of these items have been designed for bicyclists but are equally appropriate for pedestrians.

According to the U.S. Department of Transportation, wearing reflective materials is the best way of reducing accidents of school-aged children occurring during darkness. Wearing reflective materials can save your child's life or your life.

The idea is to be conspicuous and to be seen by motorists. Drivers involved in crashes with pedestrians or cyclists often state, "I never saw them until it was too late."

Tips for bicyclists

Bicyclists should have lights and reflectors on their bikes, as well as reflective leg bands or clothing. Never ride after dark without providing a visible marker so motorists can see you.

Pedestrians and bicyclists should also take into consideration that weather conditions such as rain, snow, and fog can

cut down on a motorist's visibility.

Don't assume drivers can see you. Move as far to the side of the road as you safely can.

Walk and ride defensively.
